

On the Inner Knowledge of Spirits Made of an Igneous Mixture: Chapter 9 of the *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*

by Gracia López Anguita

Introduction

It is perhaps stating the obvious to say that, from an Akbarian perspective, all the elements of creation constitute a theophany. However, it is worth recalling in the case of the genies, given the misgivings which this element of Islamic cosmology can give rise to and the negative connotations which accompany it.

The study of the figure of the genie or *jinn* in Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūhāt* reveals both the network of connections between the genie and other elements of his cosmological system and the different levels of interpretation of this concept. This plurality of meaning has its corresponding implications in Akbarian doctrine and in the exegesis of certain Quranic verses. With the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition (*sunna*) as reference, implicitly or explicitly, and based on the meaning of the lexical root J-N-N (i.e. concealment), the author unfolds a polysemy whose meanings may at first seem contradictory, but are not mutually exclusive, and prevail over one another depending on the context.

In its most immediate meaning, the *jinn* refers to what we commonly understand by genie in Islamic culture: another created being which has the peculiarity of being placed ontologically between human being and angel. This first meaning is the subject of Chapter 9 of the *Futūhāt*. Because of its intermediary nature, the genie is closely related to the doctrine of the *barzakh* and the world of imagery, something which manifests itself in its diet and sexuality, and above all, in the different ways in which it manifests itself. In other parts of the *Futūhāt*[1] it is stated that its angelic dimension brings it closer to the sphere of the Divine and makes it more suitable to receive and understand the Revelation. Genies "not only have knowledge which is their own, but also the knowledge of the terms in which they are to be found; they reflect the one and the other like a mirror".[2] However, their nature of fire and air makes them proud, disobedient and intellectually unstable in the face of the strength, humility and intelligence of the human being's nature, which consists of water and earth. Perhaps the question of whether the genie is superior or inferior to man is less relevant than the principle that all created beings represent a form of manifestation which must be internalized by man on his path to spiritual realization.

In contrast to the vision of the genie set out in Chapter 9, Ibn 'Arabī offers in the *Futūhāt* other reflections, which take as a starting point a different reading of the term *jinn*. As is common in the master's multi-dimensional universe, the terms are not univocal and correspond to a specific reinterpretation of the semantics of the Arabic language.

According to classical Arabic lexicography, the root J-N-N means "to cover, veil, conceal..." and is synonymous with the root S-T-R. Based on the synonymy of *janana/satara*, Ibn 'Arabī states that genies are "all that which is concealed (*mustatir*): angels and other beings".^[3]

The shaykh takes up an idea that was already present in some Quranic exegeses, that the term "genie" does not apply to one single category of beings, but rather to all those invisible to the human eye. What is interesting in this perspective is that it does not state that genies are angels, a question which was a source of controversy among classical theologians, but rather that angels are genies. It implies a reformulation of the question, which exegetes had been asking, about the nature of genies. The difference between one species and another is established by Ibn 'Arabī in the following way: "[when I refer to] *jinn* in the absolute sense of the term, [I include] those which are made of light and those which are made of fire."^[4]

The polysemy of the term *jinn* in Ibn 'Arabī's work does not end here. The genie can also denote the interior of the human being: "According to the *haqīqa* (transcendent Reality) man's interior is *jinn*." This reading sheds new light on the exegesis of the Quranic verse "I did not create men and genies except to worship Me" (51:56). Ibn 'Arabī states: "With regard to the verse: 'I did not create men (*ins*) and genies (*jinn*) except to worship Me', it is as if God intended to say: 'I did not create genies', i.e. the concealed part of human beings, 'and man', i.e. the apparent part of human beings, 'except to worship Me' externally (in deeds) and internally (by purifying their intentions)."^[5] That is to say, God must be worshipped from a *zāhir* or ritual perspective, following the prescriptions, and from a *bātin* perspective, with sincerity and spiritual intent. Would it be possible to draw a parallel between the antithetical pair *ins/jinn* and the classical *zāhir/bātin*, which appears so frequently in Sufi thought?

It is interesting to consider the lexical root of the term *ins*, from which Ibn 'Arabī infers this interpretation. *Ins* referred, according to some exegetes, to "that which can be seen", based on the verb from which it derives, *ānasa* (Form IV, to perceive). Ibn 'Arabī concurs with this appreciation and identifies *ins* with the exterior of the human being, as opposed to *jinn*, which as we have seen, would correspond to his internal dimension, elaborating on the idea of man as microcosmos, which is characteristic of Ibn 'Arabī's cosmovision.

Based on this same verse, Ibn 'Arabī sets out a new approach to what

the *jinn* represents. If up to this point the genie had been approached from an ontological perspective, the Akbarian discourse brings it fully into the field of epistemology, by stating that *jinn* is esoteric knowledge, revealed only to the initiated, known only by God:

This verse ("I did not create men and genies except to worship Me") shows the wisdom that He has placed in all (created) things. This wisdom remains and is unknown to anyone except God and those to whom He has shown it. Thus He has used the term jinn, designating that which is concealed and is known only by Him. Ins refers, on the other hand, to that which is manifest and known directly.[6]

It must be taken into account that whenever Ibn 'Arabī and other Sufis use the term *jinn*, they are consciously alluding to its fundamental meaning of "concealed".

This set of interpretations, which is not intended to be comprehensive given the magnitude of the work, is an example of Ibn 'Arabī's subtle use of language, and the richness and complexity contained in each of the themes which are the object of reflection in his *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*.[7]

Translation[1]

Chapter 9 of the *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*:

On the inner knowledge of spirits made of an igneous mixture

[421] He mixed (*maraja*) fire and plants, and the form of the *jinn* appeared, an isthmus (*barzakh*) between two things: between an embodied spirit located in the lowest and a spirit without a "where";

That part of it which is corporealized (*tajassum*)[2]

seeks food to eat, without dissembling,

while that part of it which is angelic

receives the ability to take on different appearances.[3]

For this reason sometimes it obeys and sometimes it disobeys,[4]

those of them who oppose,[5] then, will be punished with two fires.[6]

[Creation of *jinns*, angels and man]

[422] God Almighty says: "And he created the *jinns* from a mixture of fire"[7] (55:14). In the true *hadīth* (*sahīh*) it says: "God created the angels out of light; and God created the *jinns* out of fire; and God created man out of what you have been told before." [8] When the Messenger, peace be upon him, spoke of the creation of man, he used the expression "out of what you have been told before", and not an expression similar to the one he used to describe the creation of angels and *jinns*, in order to be brief, as the Prophet "received the all-comprehensive words", [9] and this is an example. Angels were all

created in the same way, as were *jinns*. In man, however, there are four different types of creation: the creation of Adam was different from that of Eve; the creation of Eve was different from the creation of the children of Adam; and the creation of Jesus, peace be upon him, was unlike any of the others. The Messenger, God bless him and save him, tended to abbreviate, although he went into great detail when describing the creation of man: Adam was made of clay, Eve from a rib,[10] Jesus from the breath of a spirit,[11] and the children of Adam from "lowly water".[12]

[The intimate spiritual union (*al-iltihām al-ma'nawī*) between heaven and earth]

[423] When God created the four elements, He raised the smoke to the firmament of fixed stars. He then opened up seven heavens[13] in this smoke so that one could be distinguished from the next. "He breathed into each heaven its assigned task (*amr*)" (41:12), after which "He decreed that their sustenance lay within them";[14] all of which was done in "four days" (41:10).[15] The Almighty said to the Heavens and the Earth: "Come obediently or come obliged" (41:11), that is, answer when you are called, when you are asked to declare what you have been told to say. And they said: "We come obediently" (41:11).

[424] God, ever-glorified is He, established a spiritual marital union (*al-iltihām al-ma'nawī*) between Heaven and Earth, granting them the power so that the Earth, may it be glorified, could engender all those beings He wished to bring into existence upon it. He made the Earth like a wife and Heaven like a husband. Heaven sends down[16] to Earth the order that God has inspired[17] in it, in the same way as man ejaculates when he is joined with woman; and the earth produces, as a result of this insemination, what the Truth [God] has sown in her with regard to the different levels of creation.[18]

[The four elements and the creation of *jinns* and humans][19]

[425] One aspect of this is the fact that when air catches fire and heats up, it burns like a lamp; this is the combustion of fire. The flame [i.e. the flame from the combustion of fire], which is ignited air (or the result of the ignition of air), is what is known as *mārij*. *Jinns* are called *mārij* because they are fire mixed with air, burning air.[20] *Marj* means mixture, and this is why meadows are also known as *marj* because of the mixture of plants found there.[21]

[426] *Jinns*, therefore, come from two sources, air and fire, just as Adam was a product of two sources, water and dust, which when kneaded together were called clay (*tīn*). The same thing happened with the mixture of fire and air, which was called *mārij*. In this smokeless fire, God, ever-glorified is He, formed the *jinns*. The air within them allows *jinns* to take on whatever form they desire, while

the fire within them makes them of weak intellect and proud of its subtlety. Within them also is the desire to dominate, haughtiness and pride, because fire is the highest of the elements and has the power of transforming the natural order of things. For this reason, the *jinn* behaved proudly when God, ever-exalted and glorious is He, ordered it to prostrate itself before Adam, replying: "I am better than him" (7:11–12). By which it meant that it was of better origin because God had made it out of the most favoured of the four elements.

[427] The genie did not know that the power of water, from which Adam had been created, was stronger than it, as it could make fire disappear. Neither did it know that clay was more resistant than it was to cold and dryness. Adam thus had strength and resistance, as he was filled with the two basic elements with which God had created him. Although it is true that the other elements, fire and air, were also present in Adam, these lacked the power [of earth and water]. The other elements can also be found in *jinns*, and that is why they are called *mārij*,[\[22\]](#) but in origin they do not have the power [of earth and water].

[428] Adam was given humility due to his clayey nature, but he behaved haughtily and was punished.[\[23\]](#) He acted like that due to the fiery side within him. Likewise, he had the power to change form in his imagination and in his states, due to the airy side of his nature. The *jinns*, on the other hand, were given haughtiness due to their fiery nature. Their humility, when they bowed down and were punished, came from their clayey side. Those that were satans were established in acts of seduction, while those that were not were established in acts of obedience.

[*Jinns in the recitation of Sūrat al-Rahmān*]

[429] When he recited the Sura of the Merciful to his companions, the Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, informed them:

Indeed I have recited to the jinns, they have listened better than you and have responded: "There is nothing amongst the gifts of Our Lord that we consider false."[\[24\]](#) When I asked them: "What bounties of Your Lord will you both deny?"[\[25\]](#) (55:12–13), they were firm [in their reply]. They did not tremble when the Prophet recited to them: "What bounties of Your Lord will you both deny?"

This was because of the clay and water in them (the *jinns*), which extinguished the heated fervour typical of fire. There are some of them who are obedient and others who are disobedient, as happens with us. They can appear in all forms as the angels do.

[Their original form is considered to be that of a spirit]

[430] God hid them from our view, so we cannot see them except when He wants to unveil them to some of His servants and let them see them. Since they are from the world of insubstantiality and

subtlety, they can take on the appearance they wish to adopt amongst the sensory forms. The original form attributed to them is that of spirit, or to be more precise, this was the first form they received when God created them. Later they took on diverse semblances in accordance with how God wishes them to be.[\[26\]](#) If God were to unveil our ordinary sight so that we could see what form is given by the faculty of image-making which God entrusts with making representations in the imagination of those of us who use imagination, then you would come to see in time the human being (*insān*) in various forms quite unlike each other.

[Procreation in *jinns* and in humans]

[431] When the spirit is blown into the flame, which is already in a state of perturbation due to its insubstantiality, the blowing makes it more agitated, and air predominates over it. Its stability in a single state is lost, and the world of the *jinns* is visible in that form. Just as procreation in human beings involves the scattering of the seed inside the womb, which gives rise to conception and reproduction in the human Adamic species, so procreation amongst *jinns* involves air being projected into the female womb so that the conception and reproduction of the *jinn* takes place. They came into existence before him[\[27\]](#) [Adam] and they are fiery, as inspiration[\[28\]](#) tells us, may God preserve it!

[The years that separate the creation of *jinns* and of men]

[432] 60,000 years[\[29\]](#) passed between the creation of *jinns* and the creation of man. According to certain people, it is necessary that reproduction among the *jinns* should cease after 4,000 years and among mankind it will come to an end after 7,000 years, but the order is not like that. Rather, it is as God wishes it to be. The reproduction of *jinns* continues today, as does that of our kind. We cannot be wholly sure when the beginning of Adam was, or how old his progeny are, or how long we have left until the end of the world and the annihilation of the human race and its passage on to another life. This is not part of the doctrine of "those who are firmly rooted in knowledge".[\[30\]](#) Only a small group defend theories like this, and their words will not be repeated.

[The *jinns* are an isthmus (*barzakh*) between men and angels]

[433] Angels are spirits that have been breathed into lights, *jinns* are spirits that have been breathed into winds, and humans are spirits that have been breathed into bodies (*ashbāh*).[\[31\]](#) People say that He did not separate the first of the *jinns* as a female, as happened with Eve who was separated from Adam. Some say that God created an opening within the body of the first *jinn*, and part of it wedded the other part, and they had offspring like the progeny of Adam, males and females who also wed each other. *Jinns* were thus created

hermaphrodite. This is why they belong to the world of the *barzakh*: they share the natures of men and of angels,[32] in the same way as hermaphrodites share what is male and what is female. We have heard news from certain authorities that they saw a hermaphrodite man with two children, one [engendered] by his male organ[33] and the other by his female organ. He had married [a man] and had fallen pregnant, and married [a woman] and made her pregnant. They called him the hermaphrodite (*khunthā*), which comes from the word languor (*inkhināth*).[34] He was weak and docile, and lacking in strength or vigour. He lacked the virile force of a man, that he might be called a man, as well as the feminine force of a woman, that he might be called a woman. Due to the weakness of these two forces he was called a hermaphrodite. And God knows best.

[Food and the marriage of *jinns*]

[434] Due to the dominance of air and fire in *jinns*, their food is the air content in the fat of the bones. God caused them to find sustenance in bones. It is clear for us to see the substance and meat in bones, of which nothing is wasted. On the question of bones the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "They are the provisions of your brothers amongst the *jinns*".[35] And in another *hadīth* he said: "Surely God put in them [i.e. bones] their sustenance". I was informed by one of the people of insight (*mukāshifūn*) that he had seen some *jinns* go up to a bone and sniff at it as wild beasts do. After eating their food, they departed. They ate their food by sniffing it. Glory be to Him, the Subtle, the Well-Informed!

[435] The union of marriage between them is a spiral, as when smoke comes out of a potter's kiln or a kitchen oven; that is how one enters the other and they satisfy each other in this coupling. They find each other like the pollen from the palm-tree, solely by smell, as happens with their food.

[Tribes and clans of *jinns*]

[436] *Jinns* form tribes and clans. It is said that *jinns* were originally concentrated in twelve tribes and that later they separated into different subdivisions, waging great wars between them. Some whirlwinds[36] were born of these conflicts. It is true that the whirlwind arises when the winds come together and do not let each other past. This creates the circle you can see in the dust, which is a sign of opposing winds crashing together. Their wars are similar. But not all whirlwinds are a [manifestation of] their wars. The tale of 'Amr al-Jinnī,[37] may God have mercy on him, is a well-known one: he died in a whirlwind that was seen and it dispersed over him as he lay dying. It was not long before he died. He was a *jinn* and a righteous servant. If this work were dedicated to this news and these stories, we should mention some of them. But this book is about the science of

meaning.[38] The place for such stories is in works of literature and poetry.

[The many forms of the spiritual world]

[437] So let us return to the matter in hand: this spiritual world surely takes on many different forms and manifests in perceptible forms. Human perception confines it in such a way that it (the spiritual entity) cannot release itself from this form while man is watching it in a special way. When the person confines it [through perception] and keeps watching it, and it has nowhere to hide itself, then the spiritual entity manifests to him in a form it adopts for him, like a veil. Then it makes him believe that this form is moving in a particular direction, and the man's eyes follow it, at which point the spiritual being escapes its bonds and vanishes from him – and with its vanishing, the form disappears from the sight of the observer, who had been watching it. It (the form) is to the spiritual just as light is to the lamp which spreads its light into the corners [of a room]: when the lamp disappears, so does the light. The same thing happens with this form. Whoever knows this and wants to maintain the perception of the spiritual entity must not let his eyes follow the image. This is one of the divine secrets, which no one knows except by being instructed by God. The image is not other than the spiritual being itself. In fact it is the same, even if it is in a thousand different places or in all places, and under different guises.

[438] What happens when one of these images disappears is that the spiritual entity goes from life in this world to the *barzakh*, just as we are transported by death [to another place]. And as happens with us, nothing remains of them in the earthly world. These forms which make spiritual beings visible are called 'corporealisations' (*jasad*). As God Almighty says, "We placed upon his throne a body (*jasad*)"[39] (38:34). He also declares: "And We did not endow them with bodies that could dispense with food" (21:8).

With regard to the distinction between *jinns* and angels, they both share in spirituality, but whilst *jinns* furnish their food needs from the bodies of Nature, the angels do not. This is why God says in the story of Abraham the Khalīl giving hospitality [to the angels]: "When he saw that their hands did not touch (the roasted calf), he did not know what to make of them" (11:70), in other words, when he saw that they did not eat their food, he was afraid.[40]

[Origin of the world of the *jinns*]

[439] When the time came for the creation of the world of the *jinns*, three angels were sent from amongst the faithful [angels] (*umanā'*) that were in the first sphere. Then they took from amongst their representatives (*nuwwāb*) in the second heaven those whom they would need for this creation. Then they came down through the

heavens, taking two *nuwwāb* from the second and the sixth heavens. They came down to the elements and prepared the place (*mahall*). They were followed by three other faithful ones who took from the second heaven the *nuwwāb* they needed, and they then went down to the third and fifth heavens from where they also took two angels. They then passed through the sixth heaven and took another representative of the angels. They came down to the elements to complete the proportion[41] [in the creation] of the world of the *jinns*. They brought down the remaining six and took the remainder of the *nuwwāb* from the second heaven and the [other][42] heavens. They brought them all together to regulate this creation (*nasha'*) according to the will of the Knower, the Wise One.

[440] When its creation (the creation of the world of the *jinns*) was complete, and its construction was correct, the Spirit came from the world of Order and breathed a spirit into the form, through whose existence life flowed into it. It then became an expression of thanks and praise for the One who had made it exist: a form with a natural disposition for it [for praising God]. Within it lay pride ('azama) and vanity ('uzza), the cause of which was unknown, nor was it known to whom it felt superior, as it was alone, the only creature in the world of Nature. It remained faithful to its Lord, in constant adoration of His greatness, humbling itself before the divinity (*rubūbiyya*) of its Creator, thanks to whom it had been given what corresponded to it at its creation, until Adam was created. When the *jinns* saw the image of Adam, one of them called Hārith[43] was overcome with hatred towards this creation; it looked hostilely (*tajahhama*)[44] at the vision of that Adamic form.[45] He showed this attitude to those of his kind, and they reproached him because they saw him in a state of distress and grief. When the order was given regarding Adam, Hārith revealed what was inside it and refused to obey the order of its Creator that it should prostrate itself before Adam. It felt superior to Adam because of its origin and it was proud of its nature. It forgot the secret force of water, from which God makes all living things and from which the life of the *jinns* also spring, something of which they were unaware.

[Creation of Adam and the origin of mankind]

[441] Consider then, if you are one of those gifted with Understanding,[46] the words of the Almighty: "His throne was upon the water" (11:7) – so the throne and all that it contains of creation is living;[47] and "Certainly there is nothing that does not glorify Him in praise" (17:44), bringing us the revelation with a negation, so nothing glorifies except the living. It is related in a sound *hadīth* from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, that "The angels said: 'O Lord (in a long *hadīth*) have You created anything more powerful than fire?' And He said: 'Yes, water.'"[48] Thus God made

water stronger than fire. And if the element air in the creation of the *jinns* was not ablaze with fire, they would be stronger than the children of Adam, as air is stronger than water. The angels said in this *hadīth*: "O Lord, have You created anything more powerful than water?" He replied: 'Yes, air.' They then asked: 'O Lord, have You created anything more powerful than air?' and He replied: 'Yes, the child of Adam.'" So He made the human emergence stronger than air, and He made water stronger than fire, [water] being the most important element in man, just as fire is the most important element in *jinns*. For this reason the Almighty said of Satan: "Surely the guile of Satan is weak" (4:76), ascribing no strength to Satan. And did He not reply to the Governor of Egypt when he said: "surely your guile is great" (12:28),[\[49\]](#) despite the weakness of the mind of woman compared with that of man? And if women are imperfect in reason,[\[50\]](#) then what do you think of the power of man?[\[51\]](#) [\[442\]](#) The reason for this lies in the fact that in dealing with affairs, the human was given [the capacity for] preparedness, patience, thought and organization, because the principles that predominated in man were water and clay. Human beings are well supplied with reason, because clay sustains and restrains them and water makes them flexible and makes things easier for them. This does not happen with *jinns*, because their intellect does not hold them back, as occurs with men. And this is why it is said: So-and-so is feeble-minded or dim-witted, when he is weak in the head or foolish (*hilbāja*).[\[52\]](#) This is a characteristic of *jinns*, and this is why they stray from the path of guidance, because of their feeble-mindedness and lack of careful consideration in their thoughts. As Iblīs said: "I am better than him" (7:12), combining foolishness with bad manners, due to his feebleness.

[Satan is the first of the *jinns*[\[53\]](#)]

[\[443\]](#) The one who rebels amongst the *jinns* is a satan (*shaytān*), that is to say, he distances himself from the Mercy of God.[\[54\]](#) The first of the *jinns* to be called Satan was Hārith: God made him into a devil (*ablasahu*),[\[55\]](#) that is to say, He drove him away from His Mercy and drove Mercy away from him. From him all the demons (satans) have sprung. There were some of them who had faith, such as Hāma b. al-Hām b. Lāqīs b. Iblīs, who is known as a believing *jinn*; those who remained as non-believers were demons.

This is a question about which the doctors of Islamic Law are in disagreement. Some say that the demon never submits, and they corroborate this with a saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him, about his demon, who was the companion entrusted to him:[\[56\]](#) "Indeed God helped him and he yielded".[\[57\]](#) Now the *mīm* of this verb can be vocalized with *%oamma* or with *fatha* [i.e. either *aslamu*

or *aslama*]. If the saying is interpreted as '*aslamu*', it would mean that I free myself of him, that is to say, he had no access to me, although it can also be interpreted in other ways. If we read '*aslama*', it can be understood that it (his demon) yielded, while still an enemy, in other words that "it only suggested good things to me", because God obliged it, and as a protection for the Envoy of God, may God bless him and give him peace. Another meaning of *aslama* is that of believing in God, just as with us a disbeliever submits and returns as a person of faith. This is the most proper and sound interpretation.

[Iblīs was the first *jinn*[58] to be damned]

[444] Many people claim that he (Hārith) is the first of the *jinns*, in the same way that Adam is the first human. In our opinion, this is not the case: rather, he was one of the *jinns*, but not the first *jinn* as Adam was the first man. He was different from Adam, and this is why God Almighty says: "(they all prostrated) apart from Iblīs, who was one of the *jinns*" (18:50), that is to say, he was one of that kind of creature. Just as Cain was amongst humankind and God destined him to damnation [making him the first of humans], so Iblīs was the first of the *jinns* to be damned. The worst punishment in hell for the demons from amongst the *jinns* consists of freezing cold,[59] not the intense heat of being afflicted by fire. On the other hand, the worst punishment meted out to the children of Adam is with fire.

[445] I once became acquainted with one of the saints (*awliyā*) who had lost his wits.[60] He wept as he told people:

You do not understand what the Almighty said: "I will most certainly fill hell with you" (38:85),[61] referring to Iblīs. *But observe what He,[62] glory be to Him, pointed out to you when He said to Iblīs: "... hell with you", as he is created from fire and he is returning – God damn him! – from whence he came. If he is tortured by that, then the punishment of vainglory with fire is the most intense of all; so you, take heed!*

This saint who mentioned hell, only saw fire therein, and forgot that hell is a name that refers to both its intense heat and its bitter cold. In general, it is called hell (*jahannam*), because it is a repugnant sight. *Jahām*[63] means a cloud that has spilt its water, with rain being the Mercy of God. When God causes the rain from the cloud to stop falling, the term *jahām* is used because His Mercy, the rain, ceases to fall. Thus God causes Mercy to cease in hell, and it becomes a repugnant sight and a loathsome experience. It is also called hell because of its cavities: [for example,] a well is described as "infernal" (*jahinnām* or *jahannām*) when it is extremely deep.

We ask God the Magnificent for ourselves and for believers, to save us from it [hell]. This much is sufficient for this chapter.

Notes to the Introduction

- [1] See, for example, Chapter 198.
- [2] *Futūhāt*, Chap. 336 in Gilis, C.A., *Aperçus sur la doctrine akbarienne des jinns* (Beirut, Albouraq, 2005), p.□15.
- [3] *Fut.*, II.228, ed. O. Yahya.
- [4] *Fut.*, I.254, ed. O. Yahya, in Gilis, *Aperçus*, p.□25.
- [5] *Fut.*, III.354 (Chap. 368), Beirut edn.
- [6] *Fut.*, IV.101 (Chap. 470).
- [7] I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Stephen Hirtenstein for his invaluable and timely observations in reference to the Arabic text and its translation.

Notes to the Translation

- [1] *Fut.*, II, part 12, pp. 276–90, ed. Osman Yahya; *Fut.*, I.131–4 (Beirut, n.d.).
- [2] Ibn 'Arabī uses both *jism* and *jasad* when referring to the body. However, he sometimes uses the former to refer to the body that belongs to the visible world and the latter to that which belongs to the imaginary; the bodily part of the *jinn* is, indeed, visible, which means that it shares part of the nature of man.
- [3] In the second hemistich of the fourth verse, "*Qabila l-qalb bi l-tashakkul fī l-'ayn*", I interpret '*ayn*' as meaning eye, as *jinns* are perceived by humans under different guises, although '*ayn*' also means entity. The same happens with the term *qalb* which means transformation or heart, which in pure Sufi language is the organ where this transformation takes place. In this way, the verse takes on a double meaning. The same lexical inter-reference that occurs in verse 13 of the famous qasida XI of the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Ardent Desires*) also appears here: "*Laqad sāra qalbī qābilan kulla sūra*" (my heart has become capable of every form). Ibn al-'Arabī, *The Tarjumān al-ashwaq*, trans. R.A. Nicholson, The Royal Asiatic Society (London, 1911), pp. 19, 67.
- [4] In other words, they are sometimes believers (when their spiritual side is dominant) and sometimes non-believers (when their bodily dimension is dominant).
- [5] The *jinn* were punished because Iblīs, the first of them, followed by others, disobeyed the command of God (*amr*) that they should kneel before the newly-created Adam: "And when We said to the angels: 'Bow down before Adam!'; they all bowed down except Iblīs. He refused and left in a haughty way, he was one of the infidels" (15:34, trans. Rodwell, Rev. J.M, *The Koran* (Everyman's Library, New York, 1909); see also 7:11 and 18:50.
- [6] Metre *khafif*. According to other descriptions of hell in the *Futūhāt*, every punishment is double: a sensory fire and a supra-sensory or

imaginal fire.

[7] J. Vernet (*El Corán*, Introducción, traducción y notas, Barcelona, Planeta, 2005) translates this as "fire without smoke"; J. Cortés (*El Corán*, Barcelona, Herder, 1998) translates it as "pure fire", as does Rodwell in his English translation. With regard to the meaning of the word *mārij*, see the section in this chapter entitled "The four elements and the creation of jinns and of humans".

[8] In the Qur'an there are several different passages that refer to the creation of man from clay (*salsāl*) or mouldable clay or clayey mud (*salsāl min hamā'*) and of the *jinns* from fire: "We created man of dried clay, of dark loam moulded. And the jinn We had created before of subtle fire" (15:26–7, trans. Rodwell); see also 55:14–15; the story of the creation of the angels is not described in the Qur'an and is transmitted by Tradition.

[9] Muhammad received all of the Revelation (including that revealed to the earlier prophets), and the knowledge of "the first and the last people", all the knowledge that human beings have acquired in this world: not only the names of all the forms of the cosmos, i.e. Adamic knowledge, but also their essences. He also possesses the capacity to synthesize words. Chittick, W.C., *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany, SUNY, 1998), pp. 216, 222 and 246.

"Abū Href= ".../urayra said: I heard the Messenger of God, God bless him and give him peace, say: I was sent with the totality of the words (...), while I slept I was offered the keys to the treasures of the Earth and they were placed in my hand. Muhammad [not the prophet Muhammad] said: I have learnt with regard to the [expression] 'the totality of the words', that God has condensed many things (*umūr*) that were written in books prior to him [Muhammad], into one or two things, or something similar" (Bukhārī, 22/7099).

[10] The reference to the creation of Eve from a rib does not appear in the Qur'an, but it does appear in the hadith: "Take good care of women as they were created from a rib, the most curved part of the rib is their highest part. If you try to straighten it, you break it and if you leave it be, it remains curved; for this reason, take good care of women" (Bukhārī, K. *al-Nikāh* 81/5240). In another version of the hadith the only difference is that the singular is used instead of the plural: "Take good care of woman as she was created from a rib ..." (Bukhārī, K. *al-Anbiyā'* 60/3366).

[11] The editor of the manuscript, Osman Yahya, interprets this *rūh* as Holy Spirit and adds *al-quds* in brackets.

[12] This adjective, *muhīn*, conveys the idea of humility or lowliness, which is part of the very essence of man as he was made of clay (see Lane, E.W., *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Cambridge, 1887). Reference to

the Qur'an "Later he established his line from a drop of vile liquid (*mahīn*)."
(Cortés, 32:8; see also 77:20.) In the English translations, Pickthal translates this as a "despised fluid", Rodwell as "sorry water", Arberry as "mean water" and Asad as "humble fluid". I have decided to translate it in a rather more positive way, because from an *Akbari* perspective the seminal fluid by which human beings reproduce is not something to be despised, and this water is "lowly" in comparison to the heavenly water "from which God made every living thing" (Q.21.30).

[13] Reference to Q. 21:30.

[14] Sustenance in the sense of food. God offers food (*qūt*) to all the elements of the cosmos (in fact one of the names of God is *al-muqīt*, the Nourisher), both those on earth and those in heaven. The food of the heavens is the order that God breathed into each one of them. See Chittick, *SDG*, p. 256.

[15] The creation was completed in six days: four days for the earth (two days to create the earth itself and two days to create what was on it) and two days for the heavens. See Q. 41:9–12 and 7:54.

[16] The Arabic word is *tulqī*, from *ilqā'*, which means dictate to or cast down. It carries a sense of descent as Heaven transmits its Order to Earth from above, as happens with the Order of God to His Creation, from the active to the passive, from man to woman. Creation at its different levels is carried out from the Earth, from the female or passive principle of universal existence, typical in many cosmological perspectives. See Gilis, *Aperçus*, p. 31.

[17] Reference to the verse: "On that day she shall tell her tidings ... because thy Lord hath inspired her" (99:5, trans. Rodwell).

[18] See Q. 2:33. Ibn 'Arabī uses a sexual metaphor to explain the relationship between Heaven and Earth; this same idea of the descent of the masculine to the feminine appears in other texts, in which he states that the celestial spheres (or the fathers above) descend and are joined with the elements (the mothers below) and as a product of this union the beings of creation arise: plants, minerals and animals.

[19] There are three different types of bodies: the bodies of angels are natural and luminous (*nūrī*), but not elemental ('*unsūrī*), because they are not made up of the four elements. The bodies (*jasad*) of the intermediate realities, such as the *jinn*, are imaginary, and for them to be considered elemental depends on how one understands the fire from which they are made. The progeny, i.e. animals, plants and minerals, are elemental and *jismānī*. Both men and *jinn* have the four elements, but, normally, only two of these elements are dominant in them.

[20] Reference to Q. 15:27: "Whereas We had earlier created the *jinns* from the fire from a blazing wind" (trans. Cortés).

[21] *Mārij* has often been translated as pure fire although, as Ibn 'Arabī explains, it is the result of the mixture of fire and air, perhaps in order to distinguish it from the nobler element of unmixed fire.

[22] This Arabic word can convey a sense of "mixture", and perhaps this is what the author is referring to here.

[23] When he disobeyed God's order prohibiting him to eat of the tree of Paradise (Q. 20:120–1, 7:20–2).

[24] Reference to the hadith of the rejected gifts in which the *jinns* reply to this question by saying: "We do not consider any of God's gifts to be false", while the men to whom Muhammad posed the same question did not answer.

[25] This "you two will deny" (*tukadhdhibān*), which is repeated like a chorus throughout the Sura, is a dual which is thought to be addressed to *jinns* and men. The Sura of the Merciful has many duals, such as *al-thaqalayn* (the two loads), which also refers to *jinns* and men. Duals about *jinns* and men appear repeatedly in the *Sūrat al-Rahmān*, and this is reflected in Ibn 'Arabī's description of the *jinns* in terms of duals or double meanings in this chapter: for example, *mārij*, *maraja*, *marjān* (coral, from the same root), *nārayn* (two fires), *barzakh*. Ibn 'Arabī's choice of this sura was clearly quite deliberate.

[26] The translation here follows Osman Yahia's edition of the text (*thumma takhtalifu 'alayhi suwar bi-hasab mā yurīdu Allāh an yadkhula fīhā*). However, the Evkaf autograph omits the word Allāh, allowing the following possible reading: "Later they took on diverse semblances in accordance with [the forms] they wish to be in".

[27] The Arabic expression used here (*kāna wujūdahum bi-l-qaws*) is ambiguous. One of the uses of *qaws* (arc or bow) is "to precede", although here it could also refer to the womb because of its shape. This root also contains the notion of "analogy", which cannot be completely ruled out either, as the text explains the similarities between reproduction in *jinns* and in man.

[28] Arabic, *al-wārid*. He is probably not referring to a proper name here, but rather to spiritual inspiration or intuition. However, the formula that accompanies it "God preserve him/it" appears to contradict this. Osman Yahya includes it in his indices as a technical term and not as a proper name, and in other texts by Ibn 'Arabī it is also used with this meaning.

[29] Al-Shiblī and al-Halabī state that there were a thousand years between the creation of the *jinn* and the creation of man.

[30] See Q.3:7 and 4:162. As Ibn 'Arabī mentions elsewhere, "those firmly rooted in knowledge are they whom God has guided" (trans. Chittick, *SDG*, p. 217, from Chapter 472 of the *Futūhāt*).

[31] *Shabah* means literally "apparition" or "ghost", but Ibn 'Arabī sometimes uses it as a synonym for "body" (*jism*, *jasad*, *badan*), along

with other words such as *haykal*, *markab*, *qalab*. See Chittick, W.C., *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, SUNY, 1989), p. 279. The word *shabah* is used by other authors to refer to an inert body, and this translation cannot be ruled out as Adam had no life until the Spirit was breathed into him; see Perego, M., *Le parole del sufismo. Dizionario della spiritualità islamica* (Milan, Mimesis, 1998).

[32] I have decided to translate this as "share". A literal translation of the text would be: "they bear a resemblance to man and to the angels".

[33] The word used by Ibn 'Arabī is *zahr* (kidneys, lower back area), which is considered to be the source of semen, and therefore a male reproductive organ. One of the references from the Qur'an is 7:172: "And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam from their backs – their descendants". In the same way he uses *batn* (womb) to refer to the female reproductive organ.

[34] Noun derived from *injanatha*, which I have translated as languor because this word accommodates to some extent the other meanings of the term: exaggerated inclination of the body, flaccidity, effeminateness, weakness, gentleness, delicacy (see Lane, *Lexicon*, p. 814). I have been unable to discover the source of this story, although al-Diyārbakrī in *Ta'rīkh al-khamīs* recounts a similar tale: "According to tradition, Iblīs is hermaphrodite and gives birth spontaneously". See Peter Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden, 1983), p. 32. There is also a *hadīth* relating to the relationship between hermaphroditism and *jinns*, referred to above.

[35] "The Prophet, God bless him and save him, said: (...) bones are the provisions of your brothers the *jinns*." Tirmidhī, Chap. 14, *hadīth* 18.

[36] *Zawba'a* also means "storm" or "storm demon". I chose its first meaning ("whirlwind"), as the text refers to the belief, which is still held today, that whirlwinds are caused by fights between the *jinn*.

[37] I have been unable to locate this in either scriptural or literary sources.

[38] The superior knowledge typical of Gnostics. In Sufism the word *ma'nā* (meaning) is a synonym of reality or essence. It is normally used as the opposite to the word *sūra* (form), which refers to the external, visible appearance of something, while *ma'nā* refers to that which lies within, to its invisible dimension. See Chittick, *SDG*, p. 27.

[39] He is referring to Solomon, whose throne was occupied by a devil while he was wandering the land: ("And certainly We tried Solomon and We placed upon his throne a [mere] body, so he turned [to God]") (38:34). "According to some authors, God punished Solomon for having married an idolatress, so allowing a devil to occupy his throne

while he asked for alms dressed as a beggar" (trans. Shakir, commentary by Cortés).

[40] Referring to an episode in the Qur'an in which angels went to Abraham's house and he offered them a roasted calf without knowing who they were. If a guest did not accept food, this was a sign of hostility, and this is why Abraham was afraid.

[41] *Taswīya* (levelling, regulation, proportion) is a state of the creation of beings in which the elements that make it up are balanced out, just before the spirit that gave them life is blown into them. This term appears in the Qur'an in relation to the creation of Adam: ("So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him") (38:72, trans. Shakir). The clayey constitution of man interacts with the spirit that has been breathed into him, so permitting different kinds of humans to exist. See *SDG*, pp. 303, 322.

[42] In this complex descent of the angels from some heavens to others it is important to bear in mind that in the cosmology of Ibn 'Arabī, there are two spheres above the seven heavens. The heaven nearest the earth, the seventh heaven, is the final destiny of angels, the place in which the creation of the *jinn* will take place.

[43] Hārith or 'Azāzīl is the old name of Iblīs; the *jinn* Hārith belongs to traditional Islamic legend.

[44] From the same root from which Ibn 'Arabī derives the word *jahannam*, hell.

[45] Some Sufi masters attribute the contempt that Iblīs felt for Adam to the fact that he was only aware of his external appearance (*sūra*) and was unaware of his inner reality (*ma'nā*), which was the epiphanic manifestation of the totality of divine names. See Nurbakhsh, J., *El gran Satán. Una visión sufí del ángel caído* (Madrid, 2006).

[46] Sentence often quoted by the Sufis. This understanding, *fahm*, is not the reason applied by speculative thinkers, which is subject to doubts and obfuscations; it is the power of the Gnostic that has enabled him to gain access to an enlightened, revealed vision (Chittick, *SDG*, p. 253).

[47] This verse has been compared to Genesis, 1:2, "The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters (before the Creation)", although in the Qur'an God was in a cloud at the time of Creation. For Ibn 'Arabī, things not created have an infinite possibility of taking on forms at the moment of Creation. Things can take on any appearance, just as water adopts the shape of whatever container it finds itself in. According to Junayd: "Water takes on the appearance of whatever container it finds itself in. The Gnostic ('ārif) perceives the changes in the container, other people do not." See Chittick, *SPK*, p. 350.

[48] The full text of this *hadīth* (no. 25) is included in Ibn 'Arabī's

Mishkāt al-anwār: "The Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, said: When God created the Earth, she began to quake. So He created the mountains and said to them: 'Upon her', and she then became still. The angels were amazed at the power of the mountains, and they asked: 'O Lord, is there anything in Your Creation more powerful than the mountains?' He replied: 'Yes, iron.' [The angels] asked: 'O Lord, is there anything in Your Creation more powerful than iron?' He replied: 'Yes, fire.' They asked: 'O Lord, is there anything in Your Creation more powerful than fire?' He replied: 'Yes, water.' They said 'O Lord, is there anything in Your Creation more powerful than water?' He replied: 'Yes, wind.' They asked: 'O Lord, is there anything in Your Creation more powerful than wind?' He replied: 'Yes, the child of Adam, who gives charitably with his right hand whilst concealing it from his left hand.'" See *Divine Sayings*, trans. S. Hirtenstein and M. Notcutt (Oxford, Anqa, 2004), p. 44.

[49] Referring to the guile of the Governor's wife who had ripped the tunic of Joseph from behind in her passion for him and then pretended it was he who had assaulted her.

[50] Referring to the *hadīth* "... [the women] said: 'What is the defect in our faith and our reason, Messenger of God?' He answered 'Is it not so that the oath of a woman is not half the oath of a man?' They answered 'Yes.' He said 'This is due to a fault in her reasoning. Does she fast or pray when she is menstruating?' They replied 'No.' He said 'This is because of the weakness in her faith'" (*Bukhārī*, 7/305).

[51] In spite of the above claim as to the inferiority of women, in other passages of the *Futūhāt*, the Shaykh states that women have a special power – not in vain her guile is strong and that of Satan is weak – "In all the created world, there is no force more intense than that which comes from woman"; this is because of a secret that is only known by those who know that the world has been brought into existence by the movement produced by those who wish and seek union, and those who are sought for this union, women, in other words. This is the cause of the strength they have. See Gilis, *Aperçus*, pp. 65–6.

[52] This word means far more than just stupid. According to Lane, it means foolish, of little sense, unbelievably stupid. When a desert Arab was asked about the meaning of the word *hilbāja*, he began by listing a whole series of defects, which means that it could be translated as "the one whose personality shows all the negative characteristics".

[53] Iblīs is the father of the race of the *jinn*. He was also the first to rebel.

[54] Elsewhere Ibn 'Arabī treats the word Satan (*shaytān*), which is a generic term, as coming from the root *shatana*, meaning "to be distant or remote".

[55] It may also be translated as "He made him lose hope [in his

Mercy]", from the same root as *Iblīs*.

[56] Each prophet has a demon that accompanies him. ("In this way, We have assigned to each prophet an enemy ('adū): men possessed or *jinns* possessed (*shayātīn al-ins wa shayatīn al-jinn*) that breathe pompous words into each other to deceive each other. If your Lord had so wished, they would not have done this. Leave them with their inventions!") (6:112, trans. Cortés). Vernet translates this as (the demons of man and of *jinns*).

[57] Tradition referred to by Muslim in three versions, in all of which *aslama* is written with *fatha*:

"The Messenger, God bless him and give him peace, said: 'God has designated to each and every one of you a *jinn* as a companion.' They asked him: 'And you, Messenger of God?' He replied: 'He designated one to me too, except that God helped me with it and it [the *jinn*] submitted, and from then on it only suggested good things to me'" (Chap. 50, *hadīth* 69).

"And He has designated a companion from amongst the *jinns* and a companion from amongst the angels" (Chap. 50, *hadīth* 69).

"Ā'isha, wife of the Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, said that the Messenger left her house one night and asked: 'What is the matter, Ā'isha ...? Has your devil (*shaytān*) come to you?' She answered: 'O Messenger! Is there a devil with me?' He said: 'Yes.' She said: 'And with all people?' He replied: 'Yes.' She said: 'And with you, O Prophet?' He replied: 'Yes, but my Lord helped me with him and brought him to heel'" (Chap. 50, *hadīth* 70).

Other traditions affirm that, while the *jinn* companion of Muhammad converted to Islam, Adam's *jinn* led him into transgression. See *al-Shiblī, Ākām al-marjān*, pp. 28–9, and also Pierre Lory, "Sexual Intercourse Between Humans and Demons in the Islamic Tradition", in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in Western Eroticism*, ed. W.J. Hanegraaff and J.J. Kripal (Brill, Leiden, 2008) p. 15.

[58] The commentators have different views regarding the nature of *Iblīs*; for Ibn 'Arabī, he was a *jinn*.

[59] In the Divine Comedy, a work inspired by a variety of sources, one of which was Islamic eschatology, as argued by Asín Palacios and corroborated by the discovery of a Latin translation of *Mohammad's ladder* (*mi'rāj*), the devil is also in the last circle of Hell, trapped in ice from the waist down.

[60] In Arabic, *makhbūl al-'aql*. With this term Ibn 'Arabī may have been referring to what he normally called the *bahā'līl* (the deranged). These form a spiritual category within the *awliyā'*, and he dedicates Chapter 44 of the *Futūhāt* to them, in which he explains that these demented ones have lost their minds as a consequence of a theophany and of a sudden seizure which comes from God: "their reason remains

with Him, rejoicing in the contemplation of Him, plunged into His Presence, overcome by His Majesty." The *bahālīl* may be divided into two categories: the sad ones, who cry incessantly, which would include the saint mentioned here, and the happy ones. See Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (Cambridge, ITS, 1993), pp. 88–9.

[61] The verse continues "and with those of them who follow you, altogether".

[62] The punishment assigned to Iblīs for his disobedience is postponed until the Day of Judgment.

[63] The root of this word, *jahuma*, means "to frown or look stern or morose". Ibn 'Arabī is here suggesting that there is an etymological and semantic connection between this root and the word *jahannam* (hell).